DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 713 CS 506 891

AUTHOR Beaven, Mary H.
TITLE Leadership, Charisma, Personality, and Power.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Women's Studies Association (Towson, MD, June 19-24, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audience Response; Cultural Context; *Leadership; Personal Autonomy; *Personality; *Persuasive Discourse; *Power Structure; Social Change; Values
IDENTIFIERS *Charisma; *Transformational Leadership

ABSTRACT

Transformational, charismatic leadership occurs in a conflict-ridden situation, where attendant emotional travail is so uncomfortable that macro and micro structures will admit to change in efforts to relieve the tension. An inspirational message that redefines and reprioritizes deeply cherished values and the leader's role-modeling influence serve as catalysts that prompt constituents to transform themselves at the same time that they transform the social environment. New topics of conversation issue forth in I-Thou dialogues, and social support evolves to foster new cognitions, feelings, and behaviors. Individually and collectively, people become increasingly powerful--able to predict the consequences of their behavior. However, because of the fundamental attribution error, attention is focused on the leader who serves primarily as the catalyst and symbol of individual control over a complex environment. More attention needs to be focused on those who actually change themselves and the situation in the phenomena known as charismatic, transformational leadership. (Twenty-five references are attached.) (Author/SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED312713

Leadership, Charisma, Personality, and Power

Mary H. Beaven

CS 506 891

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Mary H. Beaven
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Mary H. Beaven

ABSTRACT

Transformational, charismatic leadership occurs in a conflict-ridden situation, where attendant emotional travail is so uncomfortable that macro and micro structures will admit to change in efforts to relieve the tension. An inspirational message that redefines and reprioritizes deeply cherished values and the leader's role modeling influence serve as catalysts that prompt constituents to transform themselves at the same time that they transform the social environment. New topics of conversation issue forth in I-Thou dialogues, and social support evolves to foster new cognitions, feelings, and behaviors. Individually and collectively, people become increasingly powerful--able to predict the consequences of their behavior. However, because of the fundamental attribution error, attention is focused on the leader who serves primarily as the catalyst and symbol of individual control over a complex environment. More attention needs to be focused on those who actually change themselves and the situation in the phenomena known as charismatic, transformational leadership.

CS 506 851

LEADERSHIP, CHARISMA, PERSONALITY, AND POWER

If the way we think about leadership results from the fundamental attribution error (Hunt, 1984, pp. 169-173), then the notion of leadership needs to be re-examined. This paper, an attempt to do so, provides an alternate perspective on transformational, charismatic leadership.

Transformational, charismatic leadership typically occurs in a context in which four elements are present: (1) a crisis; (2) emotional distress; (3) a leader; and (4) an inspirational message of deliverance (Willner, 1984, p. 43). The crisis and the attendant emotional distress mean that the situation will admit to restructuring (Greenstein, 1969, pp. 42-45). To reduce psychological discomfort, people in the situation become open to change.

According to Weber (1952), charismatic leaders appear at times of crisis and humanize such situations through the creation of new obligations spelled out in their vision. Similarly, Nietzsche (1961 and 1967) contends that such leaders inscribe and create new values. The leader's message delves into the myths and symbols of the culture to reprioritize and redefine values deeply cherished, but imperfectly acted upon; this reinterpretation of values generates obligation to think and behave in new ways. As people in the situation begin to act in new ways, they change themselves and the social order, but their response is attributed to the leader. Only when there is extraordinary constituent response, are charismatic qualities attributed to the leader. The term charismatic is applied only after the fact, but once used, it generates a self-fulfilling prophecy in other situations with the same leader (Willner, 1984).

So far what has been said correlates with the literature on transformational, charismatic leadership, but that literature fails to examine constituent response. To better understand constituent response, factors related to values, personal-social change, and power need to be discussed.

QSS0685

Values. According to Cohen (1974), each society has two systems--the power structure and the symbol system. Each society, culture, country, community, organization inculcates within its members a particular value system manifested in its symbols, myths, rituals. While the power structure may change abruptly, the value-laden symbol system may take as long as two generations to change. Because symbols are ambiguous and mult-dimensional, they are flexible, allowing for reinterpretation and reprioritization. "Ambiguity is a kind of bridge that allows us to run back and forth from one kind of meaning to another, until we take firm resolve to cross the bridge into new, and fixed, meanings" (Duncan, 1969, pp. 7-8, as quoted in Cohen, 1974, p. 37).

Huntington (1981) argues that the values of freedom and equality play an especially important role in America. About every forty years the country goes through a creedal spasm and realigns its macro and micro structures. The country moves toward greater freedom, giving the individual primacy, but as excesses occur, social conscience related to the value of equality emerges, demanding a recommitment to equality. In such periodic fashion American macro and micro structures are modified as the contradictory values of freedom and equality are reprioritized and reinterpreted in accord with the particular historical situation at hand.

Rokeach (1969) has identified eighteen values characterizing American life. These values can be ranked in different hierarchies, and each value interpreted in various ways. Those that are salient at any particular time give direction to mainstream individual and collective behavior. Social and cultural change occurs when the prevalent hierarchy of values is reordered and/or when certain values are redefined.

In times of crisis the leader's message and vision redefine and reprioritize deeply cherished values and provide an implicit or explicit plan for action. Such

leads to new commitment or obligation on the part of the constituents. As Barnes writes:

> What characterizes many, if not most, people is precisely a lack of commitment and consistency. They do not have a coherent life plan either as ideal or reality. One cannot truthfully say even that they have chosen to respond spontaneously to each new situation as it occurs, for their responses are frequently not genuine but only what they feel is expected (1967, p. 6).

Thus, the leader's inspirational message, drawing upon language, symbols, and and stories resonating with cultural values accomplishes several tasks: (1) it re-prioritizes and redefines values deeply cherished in the culture but imperfectly acted upon; (2) offers a vision of the conflict-ridden situation as it could be transformed in accord with the reinterpreted values; and (3) illustrates how constituents could act on these values and contribute to realization of the vision.

To summarize thus far, charismatic leadership occurs in times of crisis when constituents are in emotional distress. Then inspirational messages redefine and reprioritize cultural values in ways that conjure up a vision of a better reality and in ways that suggest actions to be taken. This motivation is then translated into personal and social change.

Personal and social change. People belong to numerous small groups--the family, the neighborhood, groups of close friends, work groups, and the like, all of which have norms governing cognition, affect, and behavior. To belong to a group, individuals tend to draw upon only those ideas, feelings, and actions that conform with norms. As a result, people have unused potential that falls outside the norms of the groups to which they belong. Not only do all people have dormant potential, but they also have varying degrees of inner conflict stemming from the dynamics of their personality structures. According to Rank (1936), some people, in an effort to resolve this inner conflict, squelch it and adjust to the status quo. Neurotics sense a discrepancy between what is and what could be, but feel powerless to act.

Creative personalities recognize the discrepancy and construct truth for themselves as they act upon their environment to change it in accord with their values. Their individual psychological development occurs at the same time the external environment is acted upon and changed.

It is suggested that the degree of environmental stress and emotional travail in time of crisis increases the level of psychological discomfort and makes people susceptible to change as a means to reduce the tension. At that point the leader's inspirational message relating to cherished values calls attention to the leader as role model who charts the way through the perplexities of the problematic situation. According to Fisher (1988), constituents draw upon "moral faith" as they choose and create role models to follow. This moral faith has three features.

> The first is that faith originates in its practice: we create an ideal and at at the same time testify to it or witness it by trying out (sometimes first in our imagination) the action to which it directs us. The second feature flows directly from the first: that the practice of such faith has its own truth. It is a dynamic truth, concerned more with discovery than with what is already known. . . . .The role model acts like the central figure in a myth, whose adventures direct our attention to parts of the world and parts of our selves that we can explore. The third feature of moral faith is that it fosters loyalty to an ideal and therefore to others who are willing to work for that ideal (Fisher, 1988, p. 226).

Thus, people see in the leader the embodiment of what they could do if they utilized their unused potential, took risks, and behaved in ways that generated movement toward realization of the vision. The message and the role modeling influence of the leader change what people talk about. I-Thou relationships and dialogue (Buber, 1965 and 1970) emerge. No longer seeing themselves as cogs in an impersonal wheel, constituents share interests and concerns formerly kept private. As these are raised to consciousness, constituents surprise themselves with what they dare to perceive and communicate. They even dare to behave in new ways.

Self-disclosure (Jourad, 1963 and 1969) is at work. When a person tells another about the parts and places inside that hurt deeply, that anger intensely,

the person is able to leave that spot--it no longer stultifies psychological development. However, essential to that dynamic is another person's comprehension and acceptance. What one fears about oneself is disclosed; once disclosed, it loses its inhibiting force, psychologically freeing the person to act on the world in new ways consonant with unused potential, with values now reprioritized and redefined, and with evolving social construction processes.

Thus, the messsage and the leader "call forth companions who follow because they want to follow themselves" (Nietzsche, 1961, p. 51) in pursuit of values now made explicit in a situation now perceived as able to be changed. In such a setting people increasingly are able to predict the consequences of their actions, finding themselves more powerful and competent.

Power. This sense of personal and collective efficacy and self-control is important, for power is the ability to predict the consequences of one's action. Such is essential for personality development as a number of theorists point out (for instance, deCharms, 1968; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1951, 1954, 1961, and 1969; White, 1959). As the first, tentative steps lead to some initial success, people feel less like pawns--at the whim of the environment--and more like causitive agents, subjects, constructing their lives and social situations anew. Imposing order through action and creating new patterns, constituents gain power. Langer (1983) says it aptly: "People experience control as they master their internal (mental) or external environments--as they make the unfamiliar familiar" (p. 19). Social change occurs because the A/B model of power has given way to personal and collective empowerment leading toward a transformed social reality.

Thus, the process of charismatic leadership may be summarized as follows. It occurs in a conflict-ridden situation, where attendant emotional travail is so uncomfortable that macro and micro structures will admit to change in efforts to re-

duce the tension. The message and the leader's role modeling influence serve as catalysts that prompt constituents to transform themselves at the same time that they transform the social environment. New topics of conversation issue forth in I-Thou dialogues, and social support evolves to foster new cognitions, feelings, and behaviors. However, because of the fundamental attribution error, attention is focused on the leader who serves primarily as the catalyst. More attention needs to be focused on those who actually change themselves and the situation in the phenomena known as charismatic, transformational leadership.

REFERENCE NOTES

Barnes, H. E. (1967). An existentialist ethics. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Buber, M. (1970). I and Thou. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

_____. (1965). The knowledge of man. New York: Harper and Row.

Cohen, Abner. (1974). Two-dimensional man: An essay on the anthropology of power and symbolism in complex society. Berkeley: University of California Press.

deCharms, R. (1968). Personal causation: The internal affective determinants of behavior. New York: Academic Press.

Duncan, J. D. (1969). Symbols and social theory. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fisher, Berenice. (1988). Wandering in the wilderness: The search for women role models. Signs, 13,2, 211-233.

Greenstein, F. Personality and politics: Problems of evidence, inference, and conceptualization. Chicago: Markham.

Hunt, S. M. (1984). The role of leadership in the construction of reality. Leadership: Multidisciplinary perspectives (Kellerman, B., Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Huntington, S. P. (1981). American politics: The promise of disharmony. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Jourad, S.M. (1963). Personal adjustment: An approach through the study of healthy personality. New York: The Macmillan Company.

_____. (1964). The transparent self. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostand and Company.

Langer, E. J. (1983). The psychology of control. Beverly Hills, Ca: Sage Publications.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). Toward a psychology of being. New York: C. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.

Nietzsche, F. (1967). The will to power. New York: Vintage Books.

_____. (1961). Thus spoke Zarathustra. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.

Rank, O. (1936). Truth and reality. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Rogers, C. (1951). Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications, and theory. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

_____. (1969). Freedom to learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

_____. (1961). On becoming a person. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

_____ and others. (1954). Psychotherapy and personality change: Coordinated research studies in the client-centered approach. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Rokeach, M. (1969). Beliefs, attitudes, and values. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Weber, Max. (1952). On charisma and institution building: Selected papers (S. N. Eisenstact, Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

White, R. W. (1959). Motivation reconsidered: Concept of competence. Psychological Review, 66, 297-233.

Willner, A. R. (1984). The spellbinders: Charismatic political leadership. New Haven: Yale University Press.